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BOOK REVIEWS

Bentlinck-Smith, William. *Building a Great Library: the Coolidge Years at Harvard*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Library, 1976. 218p. \$17.50. (LC 75-27901) (ISBN 0-674-08578-7) ("Reprinted, with additions, from the *Harvard Library Bulletin*, volumes XXI (1973) and XXII (1974).")

When Archibald Cary Coolidge became the first director in 1910, the Harvard Library had 1,500,000 volumes crowded into Gore Hall and several storage areas, annual expenditures of \$31,500 and additions of 36,500 volumes, an antiquated classification system, no single catalog of the books available, and a number of determinedly autonomous departmental libraries and collections. By the end of his tenure in 1928, the collection had grown to 2,800,000 volumes, Widener Library was completed, annual expenditures were \$100,000 and forty-seven new book funds worth \$839,000 had been acquired, annual growth had reached 152,000 volumes, classification and cataloging were standardized to a degree, and a loose confederation if not a system of libraries was emerging.

It would surely be stretching the truth to think of Coolidge as one of our professional academic library colleagues. A paper on "The Objects of Cataloging" given at the 1921 ALA Conference was his only recorded appearance at a library meeting. "Don't call me libwaywian!" he once snapped to his nephew in an uncharacteristic outburst.

What was he, then? He was a Harvard man, A.B. 1887, *summa cum laude* and Phi Beta Kappa, a member of a Harvard family with many Harvard connections. He studied at l'École des Sciences Politiques, Paris, took his Ph.D. at Freiburg under von

Holst, and wrote *The United States as a World Power* (1908), *Origins of the Triple Alliance* (1917), and *Ten Years of War and Peace* (1927). He was professor of history at Harvard from 1893 to 1928, despite a vexing speech impediment. He was the first editor of *Foreign Affairs*, a member of "The Inquiry" (a study group of specialists organized in 1917-19 to prepare background information for the peace conference), Special Assistant to the Secretary of War and the War Trade Board in 1918, and chief of liaison for the American Relief Administration in Russia in 1921-22.

But his life was a "life of books," Bentlinck-Smith notes, and the decision of President Lowell to give Coolidge full authority and responsibility for the library was a wise one for the university at that particular time. There were problems for the new director. The relationship with William Coolidge Lane, whose responsibilities as librarian since 1881 were sharply reduced, and with assistant librarian Alfred Claghorn Potter called for unusual tact and mutual respect. The selection of assistant librarians Thomas Franklin Currier for cataloging and Walter Benjamin Briggs for reference and circulation and of George Parker Winship to be responsible for the rare book collections provided his corps of senior staff members. Preparing a useful catalog of the collections called for heroic measures. The 5-by-2 inch catalog cards in use since 1861 were gradually replaced, complete sets of Library of Congress and John Crerar cards were acquired, and the task of comparing the Harvard catalogs against them was completed by November 1912. More than 85,000 books that were listed only in the official catalog and 25,000 more that were not listed anywhere had to be incorporated into a public catalog, and the remnants of Justin Winsor's fixed-shelf location had to